

HOW TO CHECKMATE STALIN IN ASIA

An American Policy Geared to Chinese Realities

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THE great debate on American foreign policy in Asia still continues, even while the Korean war is being fought. The ultimate aim of our foreign policy in Asia has never been in serious question: to halt or reverse the catastrophic Communist advance which has already conquered China and which today threatens Korea, Formosa, Indo-China, the Philippines, Malaya, Burma, and ultimately all of Asia. The question remains, *how* may we halt the Communist advance in Asia? What weaknesses can we find in the Communist camp, what friends may we build up, by what means may we secure them?

The first thing we have to understand is the nature of the new regime that now rules China's 450,000,000 people, and threatens the ring of peoples on China's eastern and southern borders as yet free of Communist domination. For many years, American public opinion, and the opinion of a number of American top policy makers as well, labored under serious misconceptions concerning the Chinese Communists. Mao Tse-tung's rise to power, and his actions since, dispelled the legend that his was essentially a party of "agrarian reformers." But another comforting illusion soon arose to muddle thinking. The new Communist regime would, it was said, need a breathing spell. It had to take

stock of its assets and needs; the dust had to settle; and the tasks of reconstruction were many and time-consuming. For the moment, many people felt, Communist China could conveniently be relegated to the background—and this notion was all the more tempting since urgent questions in other parts of the world were demanding attention.

But those who believed that the government of an exhausted country would have to underwrite a policy of peace, out of concern for the welfare of its subjects, projected onto the authoritarian regime of Communist China—and for that matter, of the USSR—political considerations which bind only democratically-controlled governments. Instead of settling down peacefully and constructively, the new masters of Chinese society, immediately after their victory at home and despite serious disasters of flood and famine, engaged in political and military activities abroad designed to prevent the establishment of peaceful conditions in Asia. They are giving arms to the Communist forces in Indo-China; they are openly preparing to annex Tibet; and the massing of large military forces on the border of North Korea poses a threat of possible intervention in case of major North Korean reverses. The serious possibility of a military conflict between the newly established Communist regime of China and the non-Communist members of the UN reveals how completely erroneous was the hope that the victory of the Chinese Communists would, rather than proving a threat to peace, turn out uncomfortably for Stalin, who supposedly had bitten off more than he could chew.

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THE Chinese Communists, we can now finally agree, are genuine Communists in the Soviet sense of the term, animated by similar deals, and driven by the same expansive

urges; and, moreover, bound by many strong ties to the Soviet Union. Once we understand this, we will avoid new illusions in the future, or rather new versions of the same illusions that have bedeviled us in the past. For the root misconception of the character of the Chinese Communists—that they are revolutionaries of a simple, national type shaking off the bonds of “feudalism”—is responsible for past errors and lies at the heart of the newest hope: that somehow, soon, the Chinese Communists, since they are by nature different from their Russian counterparts, will break with Moscow, and, like Chiang after Canton, or Tito in Yugoslavia, go their own way. To my mind, any such hope totally misjudges the strength of the basic links that bind Mao to Stalin.

Ideological Affinities: In the Communist movement, ideology (the integrated total of “scientifically” established ideas) plays a role which is not always fully appreciated. For tactical reasons, Communist ideology may be changed overnight with utter contempt for logic and consistency. But such changes affect only the outer layers. The inner core is held to tenaciously and fanatically; it provides the Communist fighter with a “rational” (economic, social, and political) analysis both of his own world and of the world of the enemy. It provides him with a chart of his present and future battlefields. Assembling the experiences of many former struggles, Soviet ideology further constitutes an elaborate strategic and tactical arsenal. As a “guide to action” it tells the owners of the chart how to move with the maximal chance of success on the scenes of future combat.

In addition to fulfilling these functions, Soviet ideology serves a vital psychological purpose. It depicts Communist warfare as a gigantic crusade to replace the present bad (class) society by a superior (and classless) world. It thus offers a powerful political myth inspiring those who accept it with the greatest confidence and paralyzing those individuals in the enemy camp who are impressed by it.

The Chinese Communists, through their participation in the Communist International-

al, were exposed for several decades to the ideas of Lenin, Stalin, and, to a lesser degree, Marx. Any objective examination of the texts of the speeches and writings of Mao Tse-tung and other leading Chinese Communists will reveal no significant deviation from the tenets of Soviet ideology.

Organizational and Personal Affinities: The Chinese Communist party was built on the Bolshevik model. It was an integral part of the Communist International until that body's voluntary “dissolution” in 1943. The structural similarity of the Chinese party to the Russian parent organization and to its many other Asiatic and non-Asiatic affiliates creates important likenesses in behavior and psychology.

The leading members of the various Communist parties are attached to the Moscow center and to each other by big stakes and unique personal experiences. Apparently, the Chinese Communist party sent a particularly large number of persons to be trained in party and GPU schools in the USSR.

Institutional Affinities: Before the Communists of a given country have seized power, only the ideological, organizational, and personal ties matter. After a new Communist government is established, we must add to these ties new affinities that derive from profound similarities in position and interest.

The new ruling class in the Soviet Union has destroyed the members of the old propertied classes economically and in large part physically. It has broken the backbone of small property in the persons of the independent peasant cultivators; and, after an initial period of seeming proletarian supremacy, it has also forced the working class into line. Other Communist parties that have attained absolute power have, with appropriate regional modifications, followed the Russian pattern in destroying their propertied classes and in subduing their peasants and workers. Those Western politicians who consider the difference between our way of life and that of the new Communist societies in Russia and China as being “only” ideological, not only misunderstand the role that such subjective factors as ideology and personal at-

tachment play in the Communist orbit, but also overlook the crucial differences distinguishing the Communist from the non-Communist world as a result of the violent elimination or repression of whole social strata.

The masters of the new state "apparatus" in Communist countries understand these differences thoroughly. Moreover, they realize clearly that their rise to power and the policies they have initiated have set them off from the entire non-Communist world. Their enmity to the forces they have partly crushed and which they intend to destroy completely establishes a tie of complicity that binds them to each other and to all those who join them in promoting the Communist system of despotic rule, managerial-totalitarianism, and absolute police terror. This tie is in turn cemented by their fear of the reprisals of a profoundly different and potentially hostile world. But this last negative tie is outweighed by a positive identification of purpose and procedure.

The Chinese Communists needed no Russian command to whet their appetite for power. It was in their interest to learn from their Russian comrades whatever could be learned about revolutionary strategy and techniques—revolutionary, that is, so far as the wholesale destruction of the traditional system of government and property and the establishment of a monopolistic organization of power are concerned. The Chinese Communists' alignment with the USSR was thus in no sense against their own interests. To be sure, they sacrificed vital interests of the Chinese people as a whole; and they subordinated important aims of the Chinese party and state to Soviet strategy. But as a political group that represents a gigantic complex of new vested interests, the Chinese Communists made these sacrifices expecting to profit enormously from their close associations with the USSR. And certainly—so far—the balance sheet shows a substantial profit and only minor losses to the new rulers of China.

THIS recital of similarities should not lead us to overlook the substantial and crucial differences between the experiences of the

Chinese and of the Russian Communists, and the European Communists in general; but here too the balance favors a continuing affiliation rather than conflict. Since Chinese society was much less successful in evolving Western and democratic forms of life than was czarist Russia, the Chinese Communists had no competition from pre-existing democratic and liberal forces. So we find that the majority of the Chinese students greeted the Communist victory much more enthusiastically than the Russian students of 1917 and after, who were extremely reluctant to give up their dream—part reality—of a democratic Western development. Further, the dynamic and growing government had many new positions to offer that represented inducements to Chinese intellectuals to go over to the Communist regime.

The temporary withdrawal of the Chinese Communists to the countryside meant that, during the early phases of sovietization in Kiangsi and Shensi, they did not have to support large metropolitan and industrial centers, a necessity which in Russia soon after 1917 aroused strong peasant resentment against the new Bolshevik regime. The final occupation of the big cities of China and the need to feed a large officialdom and a still larger army have since led to an oppressive tax policy. But this late development will only gradually overcome the favorable effects produced by the fact that the Chinese Communist power system arose and grew in a rural environment.

These internal sources of strength, combined with the simple fact of China's enormous expanse and populousness, have combined to give the People's Republic of China the status of an ally rather than a satellite of the USSR; and the two states are like the poles of a gigantic Communist super-axis, with Russia the senior partner, China the junior partner, and the Communist tie decisive for the intensity and hierarchical structure of the relation.

ON THE basis of this review of similarities and differences, we are in a position to evaluate the most important perspective that

now seems to be guiding America's tentative and as yet experimental policy in Asia: the hope that the two Communist titans will drift apart, that Mao will become a Chinese Tito.

We know now that the ideological, organizational, personal, and institutional ties binding Tito's Yugoslavia and Soviet Russia were stretched beyond the breaking point. The domineering arrogance of Stalin's military and civil advisers and his omnipresent intelligence service are resented by all the satellite countries; in Yugoslavia this led to a complete break with the "workers' homeland": can we look forward to a similar development in China?

I think not, and because of the following special factors obtaining in the relations between Russia and China:

(1) China's Communist leaders, as we have just indicated, are in a much stronger position than the leaders of the satellite countries were. Superficially, this might be seen as favoring a break. Actually, it seems to have meant to date that Russia has felt it must be especially sensitive and respectful to China, far more than it was to Yugoslavia.

(2) The masters of the Kremlin will be all the more careful to avoid in China the excesses committed in Yugoslavia simply because they will have before them the results of their Yugoslavian policy. Just as the British lost only one major colony—the United States—and were ever afterwards careful not to antagonize any colony to the point of open conflict, so I believe Stalin, and those who succeed him, will be more than eager to limit their losses to Yugoslavia.

(3) Combined with China's special strength, as against Yugoslavia, there is a special vulnerability that may be important in holding China in line if relations between the two Communist powers should deteriorate. Yugoslavia had no common border with the USSR, while it did join, on its western and northern frontiers, areas occupied by Western troops. Communist China does not enjoy these advantages. Manchuria, China's Ruhr and most important industrial center, is cradled by Soviet territory, Soviet communications, and Soviet armies—and the in-

vasion routes into Manchuria have been tested many times by Russian soldiers in the past fifty years.

BUT important as these factors are, they are probably outweighed by a consideration which has received little attention: that is, the perspective of an unavoidable world conflagration.

To Mao and his colleagues, steeped as they are in Communist ideology, an Armageddon between the Communist and capitalist worlds appears far more certain than even to us who daily fear its outbreak. The conviction as to the permanent hostility between the capitalistic West and the Communist camp belongs among the most firmly held articles of Soviet theory. The Chinese Communists surrendered their independence of thought earlier than many other non-Russian parties; by 1928 they had wholeheartedly accepted the main concepts of Soviet theory; among other things, they repeatedly stated their belief in the inevitability of a final war to the death between the two worlds.

Could China remain neutral in such a war? A Communist China that severs its ties to the USSR and sits on the sidelines when war comes would keep itself from being immediately involved in a collapse of the Russian power system. But Mao's ideological prejudices could permit him no hope that the allied Western forces would tolerate another Communist order in the Far East for any length of time, once they were strong enough to break the backbone of Soviet power.

A Russian victory would prove even more disastrous for a neutral Communist China. The Chinese Communist leaders, like all higher-ranking members of the Communist world hierarchy, probably have few illusions regarding the Kremlin's generosity. A Soviet regime that succeeded in winning the global war would certainly be quick to discredit and eventually liquidate the Chinese Communist leaders responsible for a policy of neutrality.

The active participation of Communist China on the Soviet side would, on the other hand, obviously strengthen the chances of a Communist victory. To be sure, this in turn

might also perpetuate China's subordination to the Russian heartland; but in their role of major junior partner, the Chinese Communists would consider their basic interests secure for any foreseeable future.

China's choice seems all the more certain when we consider its own probable estimate of the military potentials of the two camps. The conflict between Tito and Stalin may well have been aggravated by Tito's doubts concerning a Soviet victory in the event of a third world war, but from the Chinese angle the world picture looks very different. The same Soviet industry which, measured by the standards of Poland and Czechoslovakia, is inefficient and wasteful, appears much more impressive to the Chinese, when compared with their own economic conditions. Russian military might is similarly two-faced. Many Poles still remember the Soviet defeat of 1920, and Russia's weaknesses in the Finnish War of 1940 were an unhappy surprise to Stalin's friends. In the Far East, however, the Soviet army has a much more impressive record. During the 30's it stood up well against Japanese border garrisons; and the Japanese were concerned about the Soviet Far Eastern armies until the collapse of their empire. The perspective of a Soviet system rapidly increasing its economic power and becoming militarily superior to the West seems entirely reasonable to a Chinese Communist.

I do not mean to suggest that Mao would lightly go to war against the United States: however, there seems very little likelihood of his preferring a rapprochement with America to his present affiliations.

THE Titoist interpretation of Communist China has, in the main, been put forth by three groups. The first consists of persons who, without sympathy for any Soviet-promoted system of power, stress the peculiarities of the Chinese national character. They believe that the Chinese are Chinese first and Communists afterward, and as extreme individualists will never tolerate a rigid system of state control.

The second group to uphold the Titoist in-

terpretation are worried supporters of the Soviet regime. They are disappointed by the police-state methods invoked in the USSR: and they hope that the Chinese Communists, who in Yen-an appeared to move so gently, will evolve a more humane version of that socialist system which in Russia took such a brutal form.

The third group consists of undercover partisans of Soviet power. They use the Titoist arguments to recommend material and diplomatic support of Communist China, hoping by such a ruse to win benefits not only for Mao's regime, but for the Communist power of the USSR and Eastern Europe as well.

Members of the first group make a faulty generalization from some valid details. Individualistic behavior has indeed been conspicuous in traditional China both among the scholarly officialdom and the commoners, expressing as it does the competitive trends within the ruling bureaucracy on the one hand and within the private-property-based occupational groups on the other. But these manifestations of individualism operate within the framework of a complex Oriental society which even under the impact of the West was never able to rid itself of its Oriental despotism. This government, which was stronger than all other forces in society, succeeded in constructing, by means of corvée labor, the greatest wall and the longest canal known to history. The Chinese peasants, their individualism notwithstanding, proved no different from the peasants of all Oriental countries in providing the mass labor base for practically all large-scale public works executed at the command of their autocratic rulers. Thus individualism and subordination are not incompatible; and a policy that builds its Titoist expectations on the former, without recognizing the strength of the latter, is obviously unsound.

Those who place their hopes in a better (Titoist) brand of sovietism in China do not understand the fundamentally non-socialist character of both the new Russian society and the new Communist society being built up in China. They may be disturbed when they

see in China the growth of new political and social strata similar to those that developed in the USSR. But since they cling to their blind faith that both societies are basically socialist, they cannot be shaken by any reference to what they themselves call a deplorable but temporary degeneration. For all their criticisms, their position is in the final analysis not different from that of the outright defenders of the Soviet line.

The members of the third group are, for all practical purposes, beyond the reach of honest argument. Moving skilfully and resorting systematically to double-talk, they do much to confuse non-Communist opinion on the Chinese issue.

I HAVE discussed Titoist and quasi-Titoist arguments at some length because they have influenced certain aspects of our Chinese policy in the past and may do so in the future. Obviously, the calculated judgment—and that of course is all we can make—that Communist China is strongly bound to Russia, and is not likely to sever its ties with the USSR in favor of friendship with the United States, will not tell us how to act at every critical point. But, in my opinion, it is fundamental to any realistic decisions.

As to the immediate issues we face, our policy should be one of flexible firmness, with no illusions that China will fall into our hands like a ripe plum. Any public actions based on such hopes would be sure to be interpreted as weakness on our part, and would only encourage the Chinese Communist leaders to intensify their aggressive actions against the non-Communist countries of Asia. Our long-range policy with Communist China, as with the Soviet Union, should be to harbor no hopes as to the possibility of winning it as a friend or ally—but to halt and contain Mao's expansionism.

First, as to the Korean question: We should indicate to China as strongly as possible (as President Truman already in some measure has) that for her to enter the war would mean serving only Russia's interest, while she herself would suffer crippling aerial blows to her limited industries and important recon-

struction projects, without succeeding in involving us in an endless land warfare.

Second, on the Formosa question: We should not hand over the island to the Chinese in the hope of deterring them from supporting the North Koreans. It should be left up to the UN to take up the question of Formosa, as part and parcel of a general Far Eastern peace settlement.

Third, we must make clear to Communist China that her admission to the UN must serve to advance peace and not as another opportunity for furthering conflict in Asia. The Chinese Communists must therefore demonstrate their willingness to stop interfering in the internal affairs of the non-Communist countries of Asia. The Communist trade union center which has been set up in Peking is an overtly organized step to this end. In addition, Peking is encouraging the aggressive actions of the Communists in all parts of Asia by political direction and also materially, as in Indo-China. Only by abandoning such interference will the Chinese Communists make clear their intention to use their UN membership to help bring about peace in Asia.

Similar assurances should be requested regarding Tibet. Tibet has its own national and cultural history; and for a long period of time its ties to China have been loose; and Chinese Communists need to show by word and deed that they have no imperialistic design to include Tibet in their power system.

Fourth, our recognition of China, if granted as a matter of expediency, should only be given in a form that does not constitute an unequal treaty from the standpoint of our official representatives or from that of other American nationals who have dealings with Communist China. In the past, the Chinese have vigorously fought all political arrangements that placed their citizens in an inferior position vis-à-vis the citizens of other contracting countries. Their objections were certainly justified. Today we must insist with the same vigor that no privileges of sojourn or movement be granted to the diplomatic representatives, businessmen, or students of a recognized Communist China (or, for that matter, of

any other recognized country within the orbit of Soviet control) that are not granted to our own citizens. Recent steps taken in this direction show that our policy makers are increasingly aware of the absurdity, not to say danger, of such unequal arrangements.

Fifth, the problem of material aid to China, now proposed by certain liberals, can, like all related questions, be responsibly solved only when Communist China is realistically viewed as a quasi-Soviet society and the junior member of the Kremlin-dominated axis. There is no doubt that the Chinese Communists would be delighted to get whatever Western money and industrial equipment they could lay their hands on. But there is no doubt, too, that they would consider it suicidal to buy short-term economic advantages at the cost of their long-term Communist political and economic aims. During the time of the NEP, Lenin was ready to accept any loan and make many concessions but none that would threaten the power of the young and weak Soviet Republic. The Chinese Communists of 1950 are no less power-conscious. To assume that they would sell for cash their tie to the most powerful political and military state of the Eurasian heartland—a state that happens to have the closest political and ideological affinity to their own regime—is a simple-minded caricature of the economic interpretation of history.

Realizing the absurdity of the cash argument, we should resort to a politically focused and integrated aid to the non-Communist countries of Asia.

BUT our policy on these immediate questions of detail is less important than the development of an over-all long-range policy that will make permanent and secure friends for us in Asia. Whatever the firmness and success with which we deal with Communist China, we will still not solve the problem of the war in Indo-China, the Huk rebellion in the Philippines, the Communist rebellion in Burma, the steady Communist pressure on India—and the Middle East.

The case of China has demonstrated to us the intimate connection between political for-

tunes in Asia and economic and social policies. The Communists appeal to the rural poor of Asia by promising them land and by actually distributing land to them after they have attained power with village support. But such an agrarian policy results in permanent benefit for the poor peasant only if the state that does the initial distributing is genuinely interested in protecting the newly acquired property of its rural subjects, and this is neither the theory nor practice of Leninism-Stalinism. The small landed property which the Communists establish during the critical period of their struggle for power is declared "reactionary" and hostile as soon as the total state apparatus is consolidated. Then it is said to be the right and even the historic duty of the masters of the new apparatus to subordinate the peasants to a collective political economy which deprives them of the proprietary advantages they temporarily enjoyed.

The total collectivization which took place in the USSR shows this process clearly; and the present purposeful advance toward collectivization in satellite Eastern Europe confirms it. In the light of these developments, Mao Tse-tung's avowed preparations for a "socialist" Chinese rural economy point in one direction and in one direction only. As soon as the Chinese Communists are strong enough, they will use their power to gain control over all land and over the country's entire production, agricultural as well as industrial. And they will do so quoting Lenin and Stalin, just as they did when, for strategic reasons, land was distributed to the rural poor.

The lessons to be learned from all this are vital. Chiang Kai-shek's failure to carry out the land reform which Sun Yat-sen considered imperative was a decisive factor in swinging peasant sympathy to the Communists. When the Communists conquered China, they immediately distributed the land. The Communists implemented a land reform in North Korea as early as March 1946, while in South Korea the reform of 1948 affected only former Japanese property. The more comprehensive general reform of June 1949,

passed after considerable American prodding of a pro-landlord government, was not yet put into force when the war began.

Yet a policy of radical agrarian change need be no monopoly of the Kremlin-dominated world; we can do as much, indeed we can do better. In postwar Japan, a comprehensive land reform which satisfied the peasants was carried out in October 1946 almost as early as the North Korean reform. Non-Communist political leadership can satisfy the grievances of the poor peasants of Asia, and can do so without a hidden plan for destroying the newly acquired gains as soon as state power permits.

But the Asiatic peasants do not yet know this: first, because comprehensive reforms have been carried out so far only in Japan; everywhere else, we have allowed ourselves to be stymied by governments representing the age-old forces of Asiatic reaction. And, second, because our accomplishments have not been given the publicity they need. America has finally come to realize that national freedom is one of the irrepressible desires of the Asiatic peoples; it does not yet realize that need for economic reform, particularly agrarian reform, is equally irrepressible and will lead to catastrophe unless we act decisively and quickly wherever we can.

This means, first of all, that we must take steps to implement the law of June 1949 in South Korea, wherever we hold territory. The South Korean and UN forces have had to conduct a war without the advantages that almost certainly would have accrued from an economically and psychologically consolidated countryside. In addition, we should systematically propagandize in Asia the fundamental reforms which we carried through in Japan and initiated in South Korea.

Wherever the need for radical agrarian and political reforms exists in a non-Communist Asiatic country—and this need exists in the

Philippines, in parts of Indo-China, and elsewhere—there we should use all our influence to see that such reforms are initiated and implemented. Will this influence be effective against the powerful groups of landlords and their governmental allies? We have seen that these groups can be tremendously obstinate, and yet I believe that the United States, as the dispenser of such important military and economic aid, should be able, if it feels the matter is sufficiently important, to effectively promote these essential economic reforms.

THE villages of Asia cannot be defended or liberated by military means alone. It is the appeal (or the lack of appeal) to the peasants which, to a large extent, decides whether the forces of democracy will meet with cooperation and sympathy or with resistance and hostility. The Communist land distributions are poorly countered if we ignore them. To reiterate, they can be effectively countered only if we confront the insecure and temporary Communist land distribution in Asia and Eastern Europe with the sincere and politically secure reforms which we carried out in Japan. Once we do this, we are on the way to winning the Korean or any other Asiatic peasant as our friend—and as an invaluable ally both during the period of fighting and in the subsequent time of peace and reconstruction. Other democratic reforms, political and economic, are, of course, also necessary, but in an essentially agricultural continent such as Asia, the land question is paramount.

For a number of years—very critical years, unfortunately—those responsible for America's China policy did not clearly comprehend the nature of the Chinese Communist movement, and of the measures that alone could counter it. China, tragically for both the Chinese and us, must now be written off—for many years to come. But clear thinking and bold action may yet save the rest of Asia.